

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 are currently pending. Claim 1 has been amended for clarity to delete the language “such as ...”. Support for new claim 13 may be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, original claim 1.

I. The Rejection Based on Kameyama et al. in view of Tanaka et al. and Sugino et al.

Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kameyama et al. (WO 2004/013667) in view of Tanaka et al. ('906) and Sugino et al. (US2003/0137732).

Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention is not anticipated by or obvious over the disclosures of Kameyama et al, Tanaka et al and Sugino et al and request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection in view of the following remarks.

The Examiner states that Kameyama discloses that the lower the stretch ratio, the further dyeing unevenness is reduced (paragraph [0053]).

The Examiner states that Tanaka discloses that the film is immersed in a first swelling bath (15-35 °C) and then stretched in a second swelling bath (15-60 °C) (Column 5, lines 1-20). The Examiner also states that Tanaka also discloses that if the stretching temperature is too low, it is impossible to achieve a sufficient stretch ratio.

The Examiner states that Sugino discloses that the stretch ratio may be adjusted by adjusting the bath temperature (paragraph [0047]).

However, Kameyama, Tanaka and Sugino neither disclose nor teach nor provide any reason that the bath temperature of the preceding swelling bath (the Nth swelling bath) is set at a

temperature which is higher than the bath temperature of the following swelling bath (the (N+M)th swelling bath) by 3 °C or more.

Tanaka merely discloses that the bath temperature of the preceding swelling bath (the first swelling bath) is set at a temperature ranging from 15 °C to 35 °C and that the bath temperature of the following swelling bath (the second swelling bath) is set at a temperature ranging from 15 °C to 60°C.

Also, Tanaka discloses that the stretching may be conducted at 55-60°C after being conducted at around room temperature (15-35 °C) as a preferred example (Column 5, lines 1-20). In other words, Tanaka discloses that the bath temperature (around room temperature) of the preceding swelling bath (the first swelling bath) is set at a temperature which is lower than the bath temperature (55-60°C) of the following swelling bath (the second swelling bath) as a preferred example.

From the above-mentioned disclosures of Tanaka, it would not have been not obvious to one skilled in the art that the bath temperature of the preceding swelling bath (the first swelling bath) is set at a temperature which is higher than the bath temperature of the following swelling bath (the second swelling bath) by 3°C or more.

Even if the above-mentioned disclosures of Kameyama, Tanaka and Sugino are combined, it is merely derived that a film is immersed in bath liquids in plural swelling baths in sequence in the swelling step, and the bath temperature of each of the plural swelling baths is set at a low temperature in order to lower the stretch ratio, thereby reducing the dyeing unevenness.

Applicants respectfully submit that the methods of the present invention provide unexpected superiority over the methods of the art.

For example, if Example 4 and Comparative Example 7 of the present specification are compared with each other, the bath temperatures of the first swelling bath and the second swelling bath are merely inverted (the bath temperature of the first swelling bath is 35°C and the bath temperature of the second swelling bath is 30°C in Example 4, and the bath temperature of the first swelling bath is 30°C and the bath temperature of the second swelling bath is 35°C in Comparative Example 7). However, polarizing films having low color irregularities can be obtained in Example 4, while color irregularities of dyeing occur in polarizing films of Comparative Example 7. This result is not expected from the disclosures of Kameyama, Tanaka and Sugino. In other words, the above-mentioned result is unexpected from the teachings that the bath temperature of each of the plural swelling baths is set at a low temperature in order to lower the stretch ratio, thereby reducing the dyeing unevenness.

Also, if Example 4 and Comparative Example 4 of the present specification are compared with each other, the bath temperature of the second swelling bath is identical, while the bath temperature of the first swelling bath in Example 4 is higher than the bath temperature of the first swelling bath in Comparative Example 4 (the bath temperature of the first swelling bath is 35°C and the bath temperature of the second swelling bath is 30°C in Example 4, and the bath temperature of the first swelling bath is 30°C and the bath temperature of the second swelling bath is 30°C in Comparative Example 4). However, polarizing films having low color irregularities can be obtained in Example 4, while color irregularities of dyeing occur in

polarizing films of Comparative Example 4. This result is not expected from the disclosures of Kameyama, Tanaka and Sugino. In other words, the above-mentioned result is unexpected from the teachings that the bath temperature of each of the plural swelling baths is set at a low temperature in order to lower the stretch ratio, thereby reducing the dyeing unevenness.

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of claims 1-7 and 13 is not rendered obvious from the disclosures of Kameyama et al, Tanaka et al and Sugino et al and it is requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be reconsidered and withdrawn.

II. Conclusion

In view of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that their claimed invention is allowable and ask that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103 be reconsidered and withdrawn. Applicants respectfully submit that this case is in condition for allowance and allowance is respectfully solicited.

If any points remain at issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the local exchange number listed below.

Application No. 10/581,610
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Amendment under 37 C.F.R. §1.111

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
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